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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000085

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BASRAH PC MEMBER ON OPTIONS TO OUSTING THE GOVERNOR

REF: A) BASRAH 65, B) BASRAH 59, C) BASRAH 58

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CLASSIFIED BY: Mark Marrano, DEPUTY REGIONAL COORDINATOR, REO
BASRAH, DEPARTMENT OF STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On May 25, the Basrah Deputy Regional Coordinator (DRC) and Poloff met with Munathil Abd Khanjar, Basrah Provincial Council (BPC) member. He described a number of options the BPC was considering as alternatives to removing the Governor. The BPC's efforts to brainstorm up alternative solutions to Basrah's governance crisis are commendable, but in the end, the BPC will most likely wait for the provincial election to solve their problems for them. End Summary.

¶2. In a meeting with the Basrah DRC and PolOff, BPC member Munathil, head of the Economic Committee and a prominent member of the Basrah Islamic List (BIL) coalition of independent Shia politicians, described efforts to oust Governor Mohammed Al Wahili. With 18 out of 41 members on the BPC, the BIL has been in the forefront of trying to muster the 28 votes necessary to vote Governor Mohammed out of office (see Reftels).

¶3. (C) The DRC said that news of the Governor's imminent removal from office had been circulating for quite some time, with no result. The BPC needed to move forward and resolve the issue of the Governor so it could address local governance issues. The DRC said he had been disappointed to hear that the weekly Wednesday BPC meeting had not taken place on May 24 (Comment: The May 24 meeting was to have finally brought the issue of removing the governor to vote. Fadillah party members were absent from the meeting, as was the BPC Chairman Obadi of the Da'awa Party. End Comment).

¶4. (C) Munathil agreed, but said that the 28 votes needed to remove the Governor from office did not exist. While all 18 BIL members were in agreement to vote against the governor, Munathil said that he did not believe the other party members would follow through on their promises to vote against the governor. There was a high level of distrust between the BIL and other BPC members, and the BIL had no confidence that the other members would vote against the Governor.

¶5. (C) Another sticking point was that there was no consensus on who would replace the governor, Munathil said. Some BPC members supported the approach of allowing the Fadillah party to replace Governor Mohammed with another of its party members. Others said that anyone should be allowed to be considered for the governorship as long as all BPC members agreed on this person. Munathil said, interestingly, that although there were qualified independents on the BPC who would do a good job as

governor, they were out of consideration because they had no supporting militia. With no consensus on how to replace the governor, the discussion was going nowhere.

A Range of Other Options

¶16. (C) Munathil said that other options were being discussed if the Governor could not be voted out. One idea was to create an oversight committee formed of representatives from each of the five major parties on the BPC (Fadillah, SCIRI, BIL, Iraq Future Gathering, and Iraqi National Accord). These five members would monitor the governor's performance and make recommendations to the rest of the BPC. The political parties would be influenced by the recommendations of their representative on this committee, and this in turn would affect the governor's behavior.

¶17. (C) Another option involved allowing the governor to retain his position, but replacing both the Deputy Governor and the BPC Chairman. This would provide a better balance of power between the political parties and remove much of the Governor's influence over the BPC. Munathil said his name had been submitted as a possible replacement for one of these two positions.

¶18. (C) A third option under discussion was simply to wait for the provincial election. Some BPC members were unwilling to waste effort on replacing the governor when the election would take place shortly and resolve the problem peacefully. When asked when he thought the election would take place, Munathil replied that he thought it would be in August or September 2006 (Comment: This early time frame seems overly optimistic to us. End Comment).

¶19. (C) Comment: It is becoming increasingly clear that the BPC does not have the political will to vote out the governor, and it was refreshing to hear a range of options that the BPC was considering in order to address the problem of Governor

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Mohammed's abuse of office. While the third option of replacing both the Chairman and the Deputy Governor would probably provide the best mitigating effect on the Governor, we suspect that it would be as difficult for the BPC to agree on alternative candidates for these two positions as it has been on a replacement for the governor. An oversight committee is not a bad idea, but it will take a long time to form and its influence over the governor is far from clear. In the end, the provincial election will decide who stays and who goes in the BPC, and the sooner the better. End comment.

MARRANO